



For Immediate Release
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**“Growing Trade, Growing Vigilance: Import Health and Safety Today and Tomorrow”
Hearing Statement of Senator Max Baucus (D-Mont.)**

Eduardo Arias went shopping, and saved thousands of lives. Last May, Eduardo Arias walked into a store in Panama City. He picked up a tube of toothpaste. He read the ingredients. Two words caught his eye: diethylene glycol.

Eduardo Arias recognized the poisonous chemical used in antifreeze. And he took action.

Eduardo Arias spent the next two days alerting Panamanian officials about the contaminated toothpaste. At first, he got the brush off. He took a vacation day to press his concerns. But eventually he succeeded. And an alert spread through Panama, and across the world. The danger had slipped by government regulators. It eluded trade inspectors. The system failed.

But thanks to Mr. Arias, people found potentially lethal contaminated toothpaste in Canada, New Zealand, Japan, and here in America. When it was all over, Eduardo Arias said: “At least I contributed something.”

We can all learn a lesson from Eduardo Arias. He was alert to danger, where it was unexpected. He was persistent, when others were complacent. He asked tough questions. He knew right from wrong. He put the welfare of others above his own. He found what so many sophisticated regulatory systems let pass by.

Every year, Americans import nearly \$2 trillion in goods from 150 countries. That’s more than ten times what we imported just ten years ago.

When Americans sit down at the dinner table, a growing percentage of what we eat comes from abroad. We import 85 percent of our fish and half of non-citrus fruits. More often than not, the televisions, stereos, and toys in American households are made abroad.

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Inputs are sourced globally, assembled in several countries, and ultimately shipped to their final destination. These imports come through our nation's 326 ports. Ships, trucks, and airplanes carry imports across our borders about 13 million times every year. 21,000 people at Customs and Border Protection work these ports. Specialized agriculture inspectors and other specialists assist them.

Growing trade brings Americans jobs, prosperity, and choice. Yet import growth also brings responsibility. It brings a responsibility to remain vigilant. It brings a responsibility to safeguard Americans' health and safety.

Today, a growing number of Americans fear that the government is not living up to its responsibility. They hear about pets poisoned by imported pet food. They hear about kids playing with lead-painted toys. And they hear about imported toothpaste that contains poison.

It is our responsibility to identify every risk, hidden or obvious. And it is our responsibility to find solutions, no matter how complex.

This hearing is part of living up to that responsibility. Dozen of bills and proposals have been floated on these important issues. We must work through these carefully with all interested parties, including our colleagues on the Committee, in Congress, and in other countries. This process will not be easy. It will take time.

Today, we need to look at every aspect. We need to make sure import safety is at the core of everyone's mission. We need to find resources and manpower to back this mission.

But like Eduardo Arias, we must persist. We must keep our eyes open, as he did. And we must know what is right. If we do our jobs and work together, we too will be able to say, like Eduardo Arias, that we contributed something.

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